

VZCZCXRO7946  
OO RUEHLH RUEHPW  
DE RUEHIL #0377/01 0511239  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 201239Z FEB 09  
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1550  
INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 9863  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 9717  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 4486  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 1097  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 6795  
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 5722  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 9044  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 3883  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RHWSMRC/USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 000377

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/20/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PK](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)  
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON IDP SITUATION IN PAKISTAN

REF: A. ISLAMABAD 323  
[1](#)B. PESHAWAR 28

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson for reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. The overall IDP situation has not changed significantly over the past few weeks, with UN estimates of the conflict-affected population still at approximately 300,000. However, there has been an increase in the number affected by conflict in Swat. Despite a proposed peace deal in Swat, on February 14, international relief organizations continue to struggle to get aid to the affected areas. GOP officials are engaging relief organizations to form a comprehensive plan to better serve the IDP communities, including military engagement and the Benazir Income Support Program. Senior Peshawar-based military officials emphasized to Consulate on February 19 the need to encourage the return of IDPs to their home areas -- where security permits. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Reftels discuss the apparent agreement by which the NWFP provincial government may agree to enforce Shari'a laws in Malakand Province (which includes Swat) in exchange for peace with Taliban militants who now control the area. It is not yet clear what, if any, impact this will have on the IDP situation.

SWAT REMAINS MOST IN FLUX  
-----

[1](#)3. (SBU) Overall, the IDP situation has not changed much over the last several weeks. However, there has been one recent exodus of about 1,000 families (approximately 7,000 individuals) from Bajaur Agency into Dir as a result of last weekend's military operations. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) continues to register IDPs both in and outside the camps. The number of those displaced from fighting in Bajaur and Mohmand agencies has remained relatively steady; the most fluctuation - and the highest degree of uncertainty - remains accounting for those from Swat, where a combination of heavy fighting and aggressive militant activity has made access extremely difficult. UNHCR estimates the total conflict-displaced population in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and NWFP at about 300,000: 237,000 outside camps (staying with families or in rented accommodations), and 63,000 inside the eleven established camps. Of that number, the UN believes that about 53,000 are from Swat and that 20,000 of those people remain

inside the Swat district. The UN says it intends to start registration of IDPs well outside the conflict-affected areas, including in Rawalpindi, Karachi, and Sindh and Punjab Provinces. (Note. While the Pakistani Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees has been tasked to care for these populations, there will certainly be pressure on international relief organizations to significantly assist them as well. End note.)

14. (C) Embassy met February 16 with the UN's National Disaster Response Advisor, Kamran Shariff, a former Pakistani Brigadier General who has been hired largely to assist the UN in its relationships with the Pakistani military. He was in Swat the week of February 9 and described a situation where militants were firmly in control. He believed the government had had no choice but to attempt a peace deal, but he was skeptical it would hold. He was unsure how the peace deal would affect UN efforts to provide relief, and he thought the UN should proceed cautiously. While it was a good sign that there had been a change of heart in the military on the importance of IDP relief, Shariff felt strongly that relief supplies should not be distributed through military channels. There is still too much local unhappiness with the military's approach to routing militants, he said. In addition, "nothing happened without the militants, knowledge," so military involvement, even in providing security for convoys, would make the deliveries a target.

15. (C) Shariff went back and forth over whether the UN should try massing humanitarian supplies into Swat during the declared ten-day cease-fire or should just maintain a lower

ISLAMABAD 00000377 002 OF 003

profile. In the end, he thought he would recommend the latter. Larger convoys not only presented a larger target, but Shariff thought they risked being hijacked by militants, either for distribution or for stockpiling for their own use in the coming spring/summer fighting season. There is also a serious capacity issue inside Swat, with only two identified NGOs really able to work and minimal presence of civilian authorities who could manage the distribution.

16. (SBU) The UN got one convoy (approximately 10 trucks) into Swat on February 7 (containing 500 food and non-food kits, 500 kitchen sets, sleeping mats, and food rations). They were planning on trying another convoy on Saturday, February 21, with additional convoys expected to follow every few days. The target is to reach about 4000 families (about 20,000 people) with supplies for 500 or so families each time. Currently, only two places in Swat - Mingora and Madain - can be reached by commercial truck. The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) will distribute 1400 household and 1400 hygiene kits to the IDPs through Save the Children.

ICRC STILL MANAGING TO WORK IN SWAT

17. (SBU) Senior officials of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Pakistan tell us they are having problems working in Swat; they hope to reach the people in the Matta and Kabal areas of Swat but are being blocked by the GOP for security reasons. Their biggest frustration at the moment is the lack of coordination among GOP officials. They obtain permission from the Home Affairs Ministry in Islamabad, but, on arrival in Mingora, ICRC personnel are told that the permit is invalid. They have generally managed to solve these issues, but their frustration with the GOP bureaucracy is high. ICRC has a good, cooperative working relationship with the military on the ground, whereby they share security information. While the military might prefer to isolate some areas where militant presence is heavy, they have not yet prevented ICRC from delivering humanitarian aid. (Note. Medecins sans Frontieres - Belgium (MSF-B) is now back in Mingora but only working in the local hospital. End note.)

¶8. (C) ICRC provided us details of the February 11 incident, in which the press reported that ICRC personnel had been kidnapped. The group of seven people (Afghans, Pakistanis, and Swiss citizens) was leaving Mingora. Within one kilometer of the town, they were stopped at a militant checkpoint. ICRC reported the militants were extremely professional and well organized. They confiscated car keys and cell phones and questioned the group about its intentions. However, they did not harass or try to intimidate the group. ICRC explained to the militants it had an arrangement with a certain militant commander (NFI). The militants made a phone call and came back to the cars to tell the group they could proceed. The entire episode lasted no more than 15 minutes. While the episode was a good validation for the ICRC of its security practices, our contacts told us it was a disheartening demonstration of how much the militants were in control.

#### INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TRYING TO IMPROVE

-----

¶9. (SBU) Relief agencies continue to try to improve operations at the camps, as well as their access to the displaced who are not in camps. Recently, the World Food Program (WFP) brought specialists to Pakistan to establish a logistics cell for an initial period of three months. The focus will be on combining efforts, so each individual agency is not running its own logistics operations. The cell is looking at distribution hubs, organization of combined convoys (the first of these went into Swat on February 7), and better collaboration with Pakistani government elements. They also sent an aviation expert to look at contingency plans should air transport becomes the only option. In addition, the head of the Surge Department at the UN Organization for Coordination and Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

ISLAMABAD 00000377 003 OF 003

has arrived in Pakistan until they can find a permanent person.

¶10. (SBU) However, security for convoys and distribution hubs remains a major concern. Military officials are extremely nervous about the prospect of something bad happening to international relief organizations. The NWFP provincial office of the Ministry of Home and Tribal Affairs hope to address this concern by creating a security affairs forum to include international NGOs, donor and aid agencies, and the GOP. Embassy is talking with GOP officials to try to resolve the access issue.

#### PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT BEGINNING TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED

-----

¶11. (C) The Pakistani government is also making more of an effort to get involved with the IDP issue. The Army's Director General for Military Operations Javed Iqbal told ODRP and Border Coordinator that Chief of Army Staff General Kayani has instructed him to get more involved in the IDP issue. Iqbal acknowledged that the army had lost ground in its counterinsurgency campaign as a result of the protracted displacements and the population continues to suffer as a result of military operations. At a February 19 meeting in Peshawar, 11th Corps Commander General Masood, Frontier Corps, FATA Secretariat, and the Consulate representatives agreed to work out a strategy for assisting with the return of IDPs to areas where security permits. The Corps Commander also agreed to begin sending 11th Corps representatives to the coordination meetings held by the provincial government for management of the IDP populations -- at camps and with host families -- inside the NWFP.

¶12. (C) Separately, Director of the National Disaster Management Agency General Farooq convened a meeting with international organizations' leadership February 16 to discuss creating a comprehensive plan for IDP management. We

are also told that the Benazir Income Support Scheme will start paying women who are displaced, beginning with those in Kacha Gari camp; they will get 4,000 rupees (about USD 50) for a four month period (retroactive to when the plan was announced).

¶13. (C) Comment. Under current conditions, Embassy believes that some UN estimates that the displaced population will quickly go to 600,000 are overstated. That said, how the Swat situation plays out will be an important factor. If the current agreement holds and aid agencies are able to access the area, it is likely people will begin to return. But all the relief agencies are taking a cautious approach in the wake of the recent killing of two employees with MSF in Swat, the kidnapping of a UN official in Quetta, and the clear inability of Pakistani authorities to provide a secure environment. End Comment.  
PATTERSON